

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4456

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, KS

SUBJECT: THE CASE OF BISHOP CHI

SUMMARY: APOSTOLIC PRO NUNCIO IS DEEPLY CONCERNED AT ARREST OF CATHOLIC BISHOP CHI. THE BISHOP HAS BEEN ACTIVE AGAINST THE ROKG BUT NOT TO THE EXTENT CHARGED, ACCORDING TO THE NUNCIO. THE CASE IS GATHERING MOMENTUM WITH BISHOPS MEETING AND GROWING INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION.

1. AT HIS REQUEST, I MET WITH APOSTOLIC PRO NUNCIO LUIGI DOSSENA ON JULY 10. HE PROCEEDED TO RECOUNT HIS ACTIVITIES CONCERNING THE CASE OF BISHOP CHI WHO REMAINS DETAINED BY ROKG ON CHARGES OF ILLEGAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

2. ON JULY 8, THE NUNCIO SOUGHT AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER WHO WAS BUSY AND INSTEAD WAS GRANTED AN INTERVIEW WITH THE VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE VICE MINISTER EXPLAINED THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION THAT CHI HAD VIOLATED THE LAW AND WAS SUBJECT TO TRIAL. THE NUNCIO SAID HE DID NOT KNOW OF THE BISHOP'S ACTIVITIES AND ASKED FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH BISHOP CHI AT THAT TIME.

3. THE VISIT WAS ARRANGED. THE BISHOP ADMITTED PROVIDING FUNDS
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FOR THE PURPOSE OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATION QUOTE IN THE INTEREST OF

DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN KOREA UNQUOTE BUT DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE THAT THE FUNDS WOULD BE USED IN THE SUPPORT OF ANY QUOTE COUP PLOT UNQUOTE OR VIOLENCE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. CARDINAL KIM HAS ALSO VISITED BISHOP CHI AND INFORMED THE NUNCIO SIMILARLY.

4. THE NUNCIO VISITED THE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER AGAIN AND REQUESTED FORMALLY THAT BISHOP CHI NOT BE CHARGED AS THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSED. INSTEAD HE SUGGESTED THE BISHOP BE RELEASED FROM CUSTODY, SENT HOME, AND PLACED UNDER SURVEILLANCE WITH RESTRICTED ACTIVITIES. HIS PRINCIPAL PLEA WAS FOR THE BISHOP NOT TO BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL. THE NUNCIO POINTED OUT TO THE VICE MINISTER THAT THIS WOULD BE CONSIDERED A GRAVE MEASURE DIRECTED AGAINST THE HOLY SEE AND WOULD PRODUCE EXTREMELY ADVERSE INTERNATIONAL REACTION. THE VICE MINISTER SAID HE WOULD REPORT THE NUNCIO'S VIEWS.

5. ON THE MORNING OF JULY 10, THE NUNCIO MET AGAIN WITH THE VICE MINISTER TO PURSUE THE MATTER. HE POINTED OUT THAT HIS FEARS OF THE REACTION WITHIN THE CHURCH IN KOREA AND INTERNATIONALLY WERE BEING BORNE OUT AND ASKED AGAIN FOR THE RELEASE OF THE BISHOP. HE EXPRESSED THE OPINION THE BISHOP COULD BE LEFT ALONE QUIETLY FOR A WHILE AND THEN POSSIBLY QUOTE SOME ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT BE MADE UNQUOTE. THE VICE MINISTER ASKED IF THESE ARRANGEMENTS COULD INCLUDE THE IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE OF THE BISHOP FROM KOREA, POSSIBLY TO ROME FOR AN EXTENDED VISIT. THE NUNCIO REPLIED THAT THIS WAS A MATTER WHICH ONLY THE POPE COULD DECIDE AS IT AFFECTED THE BISHOP. (LATER THE NUNCIO TOLD ME HE BELIEVED THIS COULD BE A SOLUTION BUT THAT IT COULD ONLY BE AFTER SOME TIME HAD PASSED SO THAT IT WOULD NOT APPEAR AS IF THE CHURCH ORDERED THE BISHOP INTO IMMEDIATE EXILE.)

6. I SUGGESTED TO THE NUNCIO THAT HE SEE THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND HE ARRANGED AN APPOINTMENT WITH HIM FOR LATER IN THE DAY. HE INTENDED TO GO OVER THE SAME GROUND. HE ASKED ME IF I COULD MAKE CLEAR TO THE AUTHORITIES IN KOREA THE UNFAVORABLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BISHOP'S ARREST. I SAID I HAD ALREADY DONE SO AND I WAS SURE THEY UNDERSTOOD. I TOLD HIM OF MY DISCUSSION WITH DIRECTOR ROK-CIA AND BRIEF COMMENTS FROM FOREIGN MINISTER AND AMBASSADOR TO U.S. HAHM THAT THEY WERE DOING WHAT THEY COULD TO MODERATE THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS TOWARD THE BISHOP. I ASKED THE NUNCIO IF HE CONFIDENTIAL

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WAS SEEING ANYONE ELSE IN THE GOVERNMENT. HE SAID HE HAD INDIRECTLY APPROACHED THE ACTING CHAIRMAN OF THE DRP, THROUGH HIS SON, THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF TAEGU, AND ASKED FOR HELP.

7. I ASKED THE NUNCIO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF BISHOP CHI'S SUDDEN RETURN AND THE FACT HE HAD WIDELY PUBLICIZED THE TIME OF HIS ARRIVAL AT THE AIRPORT. THE NUNCIO SAID IT WAS ALL QUOTE WELL ORGANIZED UNQUOTE. HE HIMSELF HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED OF THE

BISHOP'S PLANS TO RETURN OTHERWISE HE WOULD HAVE BEEN AT THE AIRPORT AND WOULD HAVE PREVENTED THE BISHOP'S BEING TAKEN INTO CUSTODY BY DEMANDING THE RIGHT TO TAKE HIM TO THE NUNCIATURE. I NOTED THERE HAD BEEN A PASTORAL LETTER RELEASED RECENTLY WHICH COULD BE READ AS CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS AND ASKED WHETHER THE TIMING OF ITS RELEASE WAS RELATED TO THE RETURN OF BISHOP CHI. HE REPLIED THAT HE SUSPECTED THIS WAS A CLEAR POSSIBILITY BUT HE DID NOT KNOW FOR SURE.

8. THE NUNCIO SAID ALL THE BISHOPS IN KOREA WERE MEETING IN PLENARY SESSION ON JULY 10 TO DECIDE WHAT COURSE OF ACTION TO TAKE. THERE WERE SOME VOICES OF MODERATION AND THERE WAS EVEN SOME DISPLEASURE WITH BISHOP CHI'S ACTIVISM BUT IN THE END HE EXPECTS THE BISHOPS WILL SUPPORT BISHOP CHI AND DEMAND HIS RELEASE. HE PROMISED TO KEEP ME INFORMED OF ANY INFORMATION THAT COMES OUT OF THE BISHOP'S MEETING.

9. THE NUNCIO WAS DISTRAUGHT AS ONLY AN ITALIAN CAN BE. HE ADMITTED TO ME THAT HE WAS NOT SURE HE COULD CONTROL BISHOP CHI EVEN IF HE WERE TURNED OVER TO HIS CUSTODY. HE DESCRIBED BISHOP CHI AS QUOTE VERY HARD UNQUOTE BUT A STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST AND A MAN WHO FELT VERY DEEPLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RELEVANT PAPAL ENCYCLICALS DEALING WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE. FROM WHAT WE KNOW OF BISHOP CHI, WE WOULD AGREE WITH THAT, AND ADD THAT HE IS WIDELY RESPECTED IN KOREAN CHRISTIAN CIRCLES - BOTH CATHOLIC AND NON-CATHOLIC.

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